



## CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

### SEPTEMBER 2004 SPECIAL SESSION AGENDA

#### SUBJECT

Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program: Approve Contract Amendments for 2004-05 Program to Accommodate Budget Shortfall

- ☒ Action
- ☒ Information
- ☐ Public Hearing

#### RECOMMENDATION

Approve the following contract amendments for the 2004-05 STAR Program:

- Remove the designated achievement test for all grades except 3 and 7.
- Suspend the statewide mandatory administration and scoring of grade 4 and 7 standards-based writing tests for one year.
- Add staff development activities and strategies specific to the writing assessments.
- Add scope of work activities to retool the writing assessment for an operational administration in 2006.

#### SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION DISCUSSION AND ACTION

- During 2000, the Board authorized the Department to develop writing test components for the California English-Language Arts Standards Tests (CST ELA).
- The writing tests were administered for the first time during spring 2001.
- Following the 2001 writing test administration, the Board had the Department and the contractor reconvene Performance Level Setting committees to incorporate the writing test into the total CST ELA scores.
- At its August 2001 meeting, the Board adopted using a weight of 8 points for the writing tests. Each paper is read independently by two readers with each assigning a score between 4 (high) and 1 (low). The Board also determined that the writing test results would be incorporated into the overall ELA CST score and not be reported separately.
- At its April 2002 meeting, the Board designated the *California Achievement Tests, Sixth Edition* as the national norm-referenced test to be administered to students in grades two through eleven.

## **SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES**

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- There is currently a budget shortfall of approximately \$4.9 million for the 2004-05 contract.
- The budget shortfall is due to lower than expected savings for reducing the norm-referenced test administration from ten grades to two grades and unanticipated increases in variable costs due to increasing numbers of students participating in the Program.
- California *Education Code* Section 60605 (c)(1) states that a direct writing assessment shall be used if resources are made available for this. No other part of the STAR Program includes this permissive language.
- The writing test appears to be insensitive to changes that teachers are making in expanding standards-based writing instruction.
- Suspending the writing tests for a year will allow the Department to (1) produce professional development materials and strategies to enable teachers to help their students better prepare for the writing exercises and (2) retool the writing assessment for its reentry into STAR in 2006.
- For spring 2005, schools will receive grade 4 and 7 writing materials along with directions and materials for locally scoring the tests.
- A three-year contract was processed and approved for ETS. The contract includes administering the norm-referenced test in grades two through eleven. SB 1448 reduced the norm-referenced testing to grades three and seven, and this change needs to be reflected in a contract amendment.

## **FISCAL ANALYSIS (AS APPROPRIATE)**

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Distributing the grade 4 and 7 writing tests for local administration and scoring, as well as providing professional development materials for local scoring, rather than administering and scoring the tests as statewide tests is expected to generate a savings of approximately \$7.4 million. The expected savings will cover the budget shortfall. The residual of \$2.5 million will be used in the development of professional development activities/strategies for 2005 as well as the activities required to retool the exam for an operational administration in 2006.

## **ATTACHMENT(S)**

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None.

Last Minute Memorandum providing additional information regarding writing assessment staff development and revision will be submitted.